

WALL SHELVES

BAY AREA

health LIBERATION news

medical committee FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
BAY AREA CHAPTER
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DEAR HLN READER

We are sending out the enclosed two papers plus this letter instead of the June issue of Health Liberation News. "Before We Make Them Heroes" is an excellent piece on the POWs prepared by the Indochina Peace Campaign, an ongoing anti-war organization based in Los Angeles and other cities across the U.S. If you want to order more from them, or make a contribution toward their work, or become a contact in your area or institution, their address is on the back of that paper.

Some of you are also getting Synapse in this mailing. This is a very funny, biting parody of the UCSF student newspaper, Synapse, and according to the latter, Synapse was published by an anonymous group of students, workers, faculty, and community people at UC. A bunch of them were left outside our door with a note suggesting that we might find relevant ways of distributing them. Unfortunately, there weren't enough for the entire mailing list, and since MCHR didn't print 'em, and we don't know who did, there's no way we can get more. We have saved some copies at the office if people want to read them when in this area, or if others at institutions really want a copy to look at for ideas, that's arrangeable.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Next Meeting

WEDNESDAY JULY 11th, 7:30 pm., 2519 Pacific Avenue, San Francisco.
This General Membership meeting has been set up for members and those of you interested in MCHR to talk about what you expect and want from MCHR, and how you want the organization to move. It will be a work meeting too, to plan summer activities, like study groups and special projects, desired by members.

People's Law School

The Peoples Law School is starting its summer session in July. In addition to the "You and the Health Empire" class, described below, they have a long list of other classes on topics like women and the law, gay rights, tenants rights, welfare rights, fighting wage garnishment, and many more. For a catalogue, call them at 285-5066, or write them at 558 Capp Street, San Francisco, Ca. 94110. All classes are free.
You and the Health Empire -- All classes on Thursday nights, 7:30 pm, 7th Ave Presbyterian Church, 1329 7th Ave. (at Judah) San Francisco.

July 12th-- Health Care Plans

July 19th --Patient's Rights

July 26th-- Struggles to preserve community health services: U.C. and S.F General

MCHR Picnic

SUNDAY AUGUST 19th, 11am--4pm, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. For MCHR's Annual picnic this year we've reserved Marx Meadows (For real!), which is off John E Kennedy Drive, near the Park entrance at 25th Ave. and Fulton. The July issue of Health Liberation News will give full directions, with a map.

MCHR will provide barbecued chicken. Each picnicker, or group, needs to bring one or more of the following to add to the collective menu: salad, cheese or other sandwich makings, bread, and stuff to drink. Friends and family are most welcome! Also you should bring games-- softball, frisbees, etc., and Good Fellowship!

Record Archives
AUG 15 1975

HERE'S THE COUPON AGAIN, GANG

ONCE AGAIN, WE URGE THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE NOT FILLED OUT THIS COUPON, TO DO SO. ENCLOSE YOUR DUES OR SUB PAYMENT WITH IT IF YOU HAVEN'T PAID FOR THIS YEAR. PEOPLE WHO HAVE PAID FOR THIS YEAR, BUT WHO HAVEN'T SENT IN THIS COUPON YET SHOULD STILL DO SO. PLEASE.....

COUPON: PRINT LEGIBLY OR TYPE, AND MAIL TO MCHR

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ ZIP _____

(Note: Above should be *exactly* as printed on your label for this issue. Write in any corrections below, such as wrong zip, spelling errors, duplicate issues, etc.)

CORRECTIONS TO ABOVE _____

PHONE(S) (Include area code) HOME _____ WORK _____

PLACE OF WORK: NAME _____ CITY _____

KIND OF INSTITUTION, SCHOOL OR AGENCY _____

(i.e. voluntary hospital, nursing school, family planning agency, community clinic, etc.)

SPECIFIC TYPE OF WORK YOU DO _____

(i.e. X-ray technician, nursing student, orderly, gynecologist, ward clerk, etc.)

MCHR PROJECT OR AREA(S) OF INTEREST _____

(i.e. prisons, institutional organizing, women's health, mental health, patients' rights, etc.) We will try and link like-interests up with ongoing projects or to maybe start new ones.)

ARE YOU NOW DOING VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY HEALTH WORK? PLACE OR KIND _____

(i.e. working in a free clinic, treating sick prisoners, neighborhood health education classes, sickle cell screening in an area, etc.)

IF NOT, DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS TYPE OF VOLUNTEER WORK? AREA OF INTEREST _____

(Again, we will try and link people up with places that need help.)

LAST TIME YOU PAID DUES, SUBSCRIPTION COST, OR A CONTRIBUTION TO MCHR _____

AMOUNT \$ _____ (Month and year, and please circle which it was.)

ENCLOSED IS \$ _____ FOR 1973 DUES, SUBSCRIPTION, CONTRIBUTION (Circle one)

MY ENTRY(S) FOR THE HEALTH LIBERATION NEWS NAME CHANGE CONTEST IS _____

(see contest article on this page.)

COMMENTS, CRITICISM, PRAISE, ETC. FOR THE NEWSLETTER _____

(Please use more paper if you need it--we really need the feedback.)

FAIR SHARE DUES SCHEDULE (please check proper box)

INCOME	INCOME	CONTRIBUTION
up to \$5,000	.1%	\$8
up to \$10,000	.2%	\$10-20
up to \$15,000	.3%	\$30-45
up to \$20,000	.4%	\$60-80
above \$20,000	.5%	\$100 up

Health Rights News. Here's \$5.
Health Liberation News. Here's \$3.

MCHR dues includes subs to Health Liberation and Health Rights News.

Dues and contributions are tax-exempt.

Summer Focus ON THE FARMWORKERS

This summer the United Farmworkers' Union (UFWU) is facing its greatest challenge. The combined forces of the corporate growers, the Teamsters, and county, state, and federal governments are attempting to crush this third world working class movement, and in doing so, to dash the hopes of working people everywhere.

We can help. On August 5th, a caravan from the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Fresno will descend on the Salinas Valley-- where 90% of America's iceberg lettuce is grown --hopefully bringing lots of people to support a possible Valley-wide general strike. Many workers under Teamster contracts support such a strike against the lettuce growers and the complicit Teamster leadership. Support from other cities is critical to move more workers to the UFWU side.

MCHR has set up a subcommittee to work on mobilizing support in hospitals and other health institutions. There are only five weeks left, so we have to move fast. If you would like to be part of this committee, or if you are willing to distribute literature about the Farmworkers' struggle and the caravan in your workplace, please call the office right away. Also we will be responsible for medical presence for parts of the caravan-- If you would like to volunteer to be part of a medical team, call for that committee through the office.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE POWS . . .

Before We Make Them Heroes

AN INDOCHINA PEACE CAMPAIGN REPORT

The return of the POWs may be seen someday as the "Tonkin Gulf incident" of the 70s, a carefully-staged maneuver which deceived a majority of Americans into accepting a Pentagon view of the Vietnam War just when our nation's eyes and conscience were opening to the hard truth.

Why are these few hundred POWs, in particular these career bomber pilots, made into heroes? Why was there no similar glorification of the 50,000 American dead and half-million wounded in the war? Why do the POWs receive higher pay and benefits, new cars and Hawaii vacations, when thousands of Vietnam veterans stand in unemployment lines?

Why do the POW spokesmen sound so similar in praising President Nixon's "peace with honor" and denouncing the peace movement? If the peace movement prolonged the war, what did the Pentagon do?

Do the POWs' stories of barbaric Vietnamese torture — of 95 percent of the American prisoners — make sense, or are we being given one more Pentagon distortion of reality?

Instead of receiving answers to questions like these, we are being swept up in the greatest militaristic spectacle of the Vietnam war, triggered by the most successful bit of Pentagon public relations in the history of the war. Even the media, which should know better by now, has lost its independence and objectivity.

In flight from Hanoi to the Philippines, a team of 80 Pentagon press officers were serving as a "filtering screen between the press and the story" (Times, 2-20-73). Official directives had gone out to 26,000 US military personnel and families stationed in the Philippines forbidding any contact with the press. The doctors examining the men were officially silenced as well. Speeches thanking the president and celebrating "peace with honor" were written on the flight from Hanoi, with Pentagon advisers right there on the plane to perfect the performance: "When the prisoners asked what they should say, suggestions were offered and a rough draft was prepared, with the information officers saying something like 'that sounds great to me'" (Times, 2-20-73). These "patriotic homecoming speeches" were rehearsed for two years in prison "toastmaster clubs" with POWs in "the roles

they are actually playing now" (Los Angeles Times, 4-9-73).

On March 29, the Pentagon orchestrated ten simultaneous press conferences involving 29 POWs, nearly all career officers, who gave the impression that torture had been the routine experience of the 566 captured prisoners. These men must have been selected in keeping with prior US policy:

"The US Army will forbid newsmen to speak with American prisoners when they are released by the Viet Cong because some have spoken well of their captors, informed military sources said today . . . Sources said the Army may make an exception if a former prisoner is found during debriefings to be hostile to his captors." (UPI, 1-16-73)

Psychological Association President Calls POW Return "Staged Drama"

The POWs have been assigned the role of heroes in a war that has no heroes—the central role in an elaborate drama staged to provide justification for the President's policy, and to arouse a sense of patriotic fervor...Has the hero image to which they have been assigned bound them to an unrealistic conception of themselves, the world and recent history, and thus estranged them further from the society to which they have returned after several years absence?

—from an article by APA Pres. Dr. Herbert Kelman in the Amer. Psych. Assn. Monitor, (UPI, 4/12/73).

The POWs are going into politics. Immediately upon release from Hanoi, they announced plans for an August political convention, probably in Las Vegas, to form the "Red River Valley Association", named after the populated heartland of North Vietnam.

Though they plan the usual electoral methods of endorsing candidates and lobbying on issues, their political ambitions are unusually big: the defeat of George McGovern, for example. "Nothing would give me greater joy" than to run for the Senate against McGovern, announced top POW Leo Thorsness of South Dakota (Chicago Daily News, 3-30-73).

The POW return was viewed in the military as a means to "set the stage for the re-

storation of unchallenged patriotism and of the status of the military man to his honored place" (Times, 2-20-73). Nixon is trying to prove that the Vietnam war was justified. Republicans and POWs already attack McGovern, Kennedy, Fulbright and the Democratic Party as a "sell-out brigade". Through this process, the American people are to be soothed about the troubling question of American war crimes, and be dulled in the face of real torture still going on in South Vietnam. Attention is being diverted away from the bombing of Laos and Cambodia. Public support for aid to North Vietnam will wane. Attempts to establish friendship or cultural ties with the Vietnamese people will become more difficult as the Nixon Administration continues a "cold war" against those they call "barbaric".

The POW return must be seen internationally in the context of the Indochina crisis. By signing the Paris Peace Agreement Nixon has accepted a loss of American power in Indochina — by withdrawing American troops, recognizing the national unity of Vietnam and the existence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government in the South. The Administration is attempting to recover that lost ground by weakening the anti-war movement at home so as to maintain a lingering base for continuing bombing and intervention as long as possible.

The POW return also heralds a new McCarthyism against the organized anti-war movement as a whole. Nixon wants to repeat the Fifties in the Seventies. With deepening problems at home and abroad, he wants to break up the organized forms of opposition developed in the last decade. In the POWs the Administration had found what it long has lacked — a legitimate, credible pro-war force. The hawk position has been generally discredited not only in the universities but in the media and, as Nixon himself complained in 1972, among leaders of the establishment. For some time the war has been justified on the basis of its "winding down". Now at last the POWs represent an instrument to undermine dissent, restore conservative patriotic feeling, and "lead" the right-wing towards electoral power in 1974 and 1976.



When smiling American POWs were leaving Hanoi, their counterparts, prisoners of the Saigon regime, were released from the Con Son Island camp in South Vietnam. Time Magazine reporter, David De

Voss, described their condition as "shapes... grotesque sculptures of scarred flesh and gnarled limbs. They move like crabs, skittering across the floor on buttocks and palms." (Time, 3/19/73).

AUG 15 1975
Archives

U.S. TORTURE STORIES

The Nixon Administration has presented a twisted description of the systematic torture of American POWs in Vietnam. A preliminary survey, based on media interviews, conversations with reporters covering the POW return, and both direct and indirect contact with POWs themselves, leads to several striking conclusions: **WE SHOULD HAVE BELIEVED OUR EYES, OUR SENSES.** As *Newsweek* (4-16-73) remarked, "the (torture) stories seemed incongruent with the men telling them — a trim, trig lot who, given a few pounds more flesh, might have stepped right out of a recruiting poster . . . By and large, the POWs were indeed in better shape than the Pentagon had expected". Operation Homecoming personnel in the Philippines said "their health is so good that in some cases we have had to assign two escorts per returnee. The returnees were going through processing faster than one escort could keep up with" (AP, 2-19-73).

THE SURVIVAL RATE IN NORTH VIETNAMESE PRISONS WAS FAR BETTER THAN FOR AMERICAN IN KOREA, WORLD WAR II, AND EVEN OUR OWN CIVIL WAR. The first official estimates were that "the death rate in North Vietnamese prison camps was about ten percent (*LA Times*, 3-31-73). This figure was for prisoners who suffered many serious injuries from ejecting at hundreds of miles per hour. In the Korean war 38 percent of American prisoners died in camps (*NY Times*, 8-6-72), and in World War II the rate was 27 percent in Japanese prison camps (John Van Dyke in *New York Review*, 1-7-71). In the summer of 1864 alone, 12,000 Union soldiers died in the Confederate prison at Anderson (*Rebel Flag: Conditions in Confederate Prisons*—the memoirs of S. S. Boggs).

THOSE WHO CAN CLAIM THE VIETNAMESE APPLIED A POLICY OF SYSTEMATIC TORTURE ARE MOSTLY CAREER OFFICERS SHOT DOWN IN THE 1965-67 PERIOD. THEY ARE THE MOST BIASED AND CONSERVATIVE OFFICERS IN THE US MILITARY. Pentagon propaganda has not focussed on the POWs who say they were not tortured (a few from the early period; most from 1969-73, including those shot down bombing Hanoi at Christmas). Those who are speaking most loudly now "were mostly a select group to begin with, mostly Air Force and Navy career officers" (*Newsweek*, 4-16-73). A Navy press officer in contact with the returning POWs said, "Aviators are different, I don't know if they're trying to prove their manhood or what, but they're the most egocentric people I know" (to Steve Roberts of the *NY Times*, 4-5-73). These officers carry out the same kind of institutionalized lying revealed in the Pentagon Papers, Senate Lavelle hearings, the My Lai investigation; since they are still disciplined military men, it is difficult to believe they are now telling the whole truth. A racial hatred of the Vietnamese, whom they habitually refer to as "gooks", also destroys their objectivity.

POW leader, Cmdr. Joseph Mulligan, said of the Vietnamese: "I know what sleazy gooks those people are. When you live with them, you know what they are. I had more respect for the gooks the first day I was there, and every day since I lost respect. They're so bad, they're inferior. I would say that these guys are the most corrupt people I've ever seen around, corrupt from top to bottom. They know nothing about the truth, they have no allegiance to anything, they're really creepy people". (to a *NY Times* reporter, 3-28-73).

One POW estimated that "hard-line" military men . . . became even more hawkish

during captivity" (*NY Times*, 2-23-73).

THE POWS DEFINE TORTURE IN A SUSPICIOUS CATCH-ALL WAY THAT WOULD IN MANY WAYS BE APPLICABLE TO PRISON CONDITIONS IN THE US. Torture usually means the deliberate, systematic physical and mental shattering of prisoners. It is categorically worse than brutality or intimidation, and not to be compared with solitary confinement or inadequate food and medicine. In March 1973 there were more prisoners in solitary confinement in California alone — 750 — for lesser offenses than bombing, than there were American POWs in all of Indochina. (Karabian's Assembly Select Comm. on Prison Reform and Rehabilitation.) Even according to the POWs own account, only a small minority suffered beatings or the "rope treatment" over a sustained period. For the rest, isolation and poor facilities were the main problems and, by their own testimony, "life improved significantly for the POWs after 1969" (*Newsweek*, 4-19-73); that is, for approximately 200 prisoners taken from 1969-73, there was no torture even in the POWs' sense of the term.

Pilot Norris Charles, interviewed upon release in October 1972, said of torture: "The old guys mentioned it quite a bit. There was a great deal of torture in the old days, but I've heard some from the old guys that there wasn't any torture. So, I guess it's dependent on the individual. I really can't say . . . But from my personal experience, I never experienced any torture. But it's something to think about, you know. If you scratch your hand, you know, some kids cry, but if you break your wrist, some people don't cry. It depends." (interview by Steve Jaffe, 10-12-72). Major Norman McDaniel says: "We as blacks grew up in a situation where we did not expect first-class treatment." His background helped prepare him for the prison diet of rice, turnips, squash, fish and pork fat — food that turned the stomachs of many captured pilots from white, middle-class backgrounds. "To a poor black from the South, the fare was not unlike 'soul food', he said" (*NY Times*, 4-8-73).

THE CONTEXT OF MISTREATMENT IS VITAL TO UNDERSTAND. MUCH OF THE ALLEGED BRUTALITY CAME FROM VILLAGERS RATHER THAN SOLDIERS, OR WAS DUE TO INFRACTIONS OF PRISON RULES, OR TO ARROGANT EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE TREATMENT THAT SHOULD BE DUE AMERICAN PILOTS.

Capt. Carl Chambers: "I can honestly say that that five and a half year nightmare seems so small now. It almost seems like I went to bed one night, had a nightmare, and woke up the next morning. And I don't hold any grudges . . . Just stop and think what would happen if they — the North Vietnamese fighter pilots — bailed out over Pittsburgh and he just got through bombing one of the steel plants. What do you think those steel honkies would do with him? Or in my neighborhood in Los Angeles? Well, what do you think would happen to him? If the Army could get to him in time, he'd probably be okay. But if a couple of those steel honkies got a hold of him, he'd be a dead man" (WNBC-TV, 3-30-73). There is also the story of John Joseph Fritz who "once tried to kill his Communist guard and was put on reduced rations as punishment" (UPI, LA Times, 4-4-73). What would attempted murder be punished by in Attica or San Quentin?

Floyd Kushner has been widely quoted as saying "I have been beaten. I have been shackled. I endured the rigors of cruel treatment, was placed in solitary confinement" but the context of his remarks only appeared in the Danville, Va. *Commercial Appeal* (4-16-73) where he said, "It all depends on how you define torture . . . (my treatment) was not to extract information, but for infraction of camp rules". Douglas Ramsey, a State Department official held for seven years in South Vietnam, "told of being chained to a tree by his captors while making a shift in prison camps, but added that it was a step he could understand, given the circumstances. (*NY Times*, 3-2-73).

THE SENIOR OFFICERS ORDERED THE POWS TO PROVOKE THE VIETNAMESE GUARDS INTO BRUTAL TREATMENT.



The famous 'rope trick' as practiced by the Americans. Instead of having their hands tied behind their backs the rope is noosed around the neck getting tighter and tighter as the prisoners are pulled along.

ES: A Distortion of Facts

"Some of the most brutal treatment was reserved for senior officers who fostered resistance in the ranks" (*Newsweek*, 4-9-73). Commander Jeremiah Denton: "We forced them to be brutal to us. And this policy was successful in that the consequent exposure of their brutality ultimately caused US public and official pressure to bear so heavily on our captors that treatment was eventually improved and meanwhile our honor was preserved. I think this is the real story of the Battle of Hanoi" (*New Bedford, Mass., Standard Times*, 3-30-73). Commander Leo Thorsness "was feisty enough to earn a reputation among the guards as being a trouble-maker. That reputation

how he would deal with debriefing, Pitzer said the informal military policy was to collaborate as much as necessary while a prisoner, then repudiate the action later by citing torture. Pitzer threw out the first ball at the opening game last year attended by President Nixon.

IT APPEARS THAT MEN CAPTURED IN THE SOUTH (WHERE CONDITIONS WERE WORSE FOR ALL), HAVE FEWER COMPLAINTS THAN THE CAREER OFFICERS HELD IN THE NORTH.

Floyd Kushner: "I was damned glad to get to North Vietnam, to get to a jail. I thought it was splendid" (*Grand Rapids Press*, 4-4-73). Douglas Ramsey, after 6 years in "crude cages", "repeatedly emphasized during a two-hour meeting with newsmen today — the first since his release last month — that his handling, under the circumstances, would not constitute gross mistreatment" (*NY Times*, 3-2-73). Gary Guggenberg "doesn't think of those four years in the jungle as a horror story. That's because he is not bitter, does not hate the Vietcong or North Vietnamese. He respects them. They shared much of the horror with him and they kept him alive when it would have been easy to let him die" (*Minneapolis Tribune*, 3-1-73).

Army CWO Francis Anton: "In contrast to the many tales of torture being told by returning prisoners of war, an enlisted man who spent five years in the hands of the Vietcong said that they treated him almost as well as they did themselves" (*UPI*, 4-1-73). Guggenberger "said some of the other 26 men released in South Vietnam share his views. There was tension between them and some of the men released in Hanoi when they got to Clark Air Base in the Philippines. 'Nothing much was said', he recalled, 'but one guy did talk about our lack of discipline and not saluting the general (who greeted them) or the colors (American flag). 'Man, that was the last thing I was thinking of when I got off that plane. I was FREE! . . . Those other guys can say what they want about us (but) I know life in the North was no picnic but it sure as hell wasn't any better where we were'" (*Minneapolis Tribune*). Perhaps the most controversial POWs are the "peace committee", a group which opposed the war and defied the orders of the senior officers: "None of them are officers and some of them are black," the official added, referring to the anti-war soldiers, 'so the club is going after them'" (*NY Times*, 3-16-73).

A NUMBER OF POWS TOOK ANTI-WAR STANDS, A NUMBER SAY THEY WERE NEVER TORTURED, AND SOME SAY THEY WERE ADEQUATELY TREATED BEFORE 1969, CONTRADICTING THE US CLAIM THAT TORTURE ONLY CEASED BECAUSE OF THE NEW NIXON POLICIES.

Floyd Kushner: "Most of the POWs I knew agreed with me, and with my statement that the war was harmful to my country." Capt. Walter Wilber, downed in 1968, after 20 years in the Navy: "I happen to love my country very much and I found that when I had time to think about myself, where I was, what we were doing, I found that my conscience bothered me . . . I was never tortured or physically beaten. I never heard anybody scream out, either from nightmares or injury or being threatened. (When) the other 600 of us are heard from, you find that this will be somewhat, very much, the same. Each person has to tell his own story" (*60 Minutes*, CBS, 4-1-73, *LA Times*, 4-7-73). Capt. Edison Miller, downed in October 1967: "In my opinion the

treatment has always been satisfactory and today I would say the treatment is good . . . Let me say that the Vietnamese position is constant improvement in accordance with what they're able to give us" (*NY Times*, 3-25-72). Major Hubert Flesher, downed December 1966: "Personally I don't think there was any attempt at brainwashing. There were the super-patriots (POWs) who felt we should be in there killing them by the thousands, as opposed to another faction which felt the bombing and that sort of thing was not doing any good" (*NY Times*, 3-9-73).

Gary Daves, an anti-war civilian held five years in a camp with pro-war Major Floyd Thompson: "Throughout those five years, the treatment he received and the treatment I received, were completely the same" (*LA Times*, 4-2-73). Capt. Lynn Guenther, shot down December 1971: "Said he would like to return to Vietnam as a visitor when peace is firmly restored . . . and be involved in efforts to rebuild it. While there was no love lost between him and his captors during confinement, the guards were consistently civil, he said". (*NY Times*, 3-11-73).

THESE MEN OWE THEIR MENDED BODIES, AND THEIR GOOD HEALTH, TO THE VIETNAMESE WHO REMAIN STEREOTYPED AS BARBARIANS. The Asia correspondent of the conservative *Chicago Tribune* wrote from Hanoi: "Oddly, the Vietnamese watching the final release did not seem personally hostile toward any of the prisoners" (*Tribune*, 3-30-73). Norris Charles described the Vietnamese in his prison anecdotes: "There was this one guard we thought was crazy but he was a really good guy, he watched over us and took care of us but anyway, matter of fact he shaved one of the prisoners that had a broken arm and couldn't shave so he shaved him for him. And he was telling us, you should be thankful to Uncle Ho because he told us that we shouldn't hit or hurt any prisoners, we should take care of them because basically they are good people, and they just don't understand. We used to call him Thank You Uncle Ho. He was a pretty good guy . . . They just feed you, clothe you, shelter you and take care of your medical needs and they try to give you games to play, and stuff to read. You've been there seven years and they really don't have anything against you. They feel that humans are basically good, you know, and once they know the truth will then maybe react to it. And they don't care if you react or not, but they feel that they should (treat you that way) because they are very humane people" (to Steve Jaffe, 10-12-72).



POW:
TWO YEARS WITH THE VIET CONG
A book by George Smith
Ramparts Press

POW is the most important book to date on the context of life in a prisoner of war camp. Written by one of the first POWs ever taken in a guerrilla war, this book forces you to read between the lines of the nation's press.

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once got nine months in 'skid row,' the punishment prison near Hanoi" (*Minneapolis Tribune*, 4-8-73). Speaking to an American journalist before his release, Capt. Edison Miller said, "When the bombing was still going on heavy, there were hard feelings. If you were antagonistic, you were asking for trouble sometimes, but it was not policy and it depended on your personal behavior" (*NY Times*, 3-25-72).

THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THE VIETNAMESE THEMSELVES WERE CONCERNED ABOUT ANY MISAPPLICATIONS OF THEIR POLICY OF LENIENCY. Douglas Ramsey: "Often, he continued, Vietcong prison guards would hoard or in other ways appropriate food meant for the prisoners, but such situations were sometimes rectified by direct complaints to prison camp officials. A lot of it depended on the camp commanders . . ." (*NY Times*, 3-2-73). Gary Guggenberger: "The commanding officer asked what was wrong and the men complained that they weren't getting enough food. 'Aren't you getting sugar and meat?', the officer asked. The prisoners said no, and the officer chastized the guards . . . The food supply got better" (*Minneapolis Tribune*, 3-1-73). Mulligan: "I honestly think (the guards) were ashamed. They were always saying how they had a 4500 year history of humane treatment of their enemies, and said that the policy was just misapplied in our cases".

THE CLAIM TO HAVING BEEN TORTURED, OR THE EXAGGERATION OF MISTREATMENT, JUSTIFIED THE ANTI-WAR STATEMENTS MADE BY POWS IN CAPTIVITY AND SAVED THEIR MILITARY CAREERS.

Sgt. Daniel Pitzer, a Green Beret released in Nov. 1967 from the South, told Tom Hayden (who was escorting him home) he committed acts of "collaboration with the enemy" such as translating leaflets and teaching English. Asked

Who Is Being Brainwashed?

By JANE FONDA

In the winter of 1971 over one hundred returned Vietnam veterans, officers and enlisted men, held the Winter Soldier Investigation in Detroit. Baring themselves before the American public, stripping themselves of their Purple Hearts and Bronze Stars, they told of the atrocities they had committed or seen committed by U.S. troops against the Vietnamese people. In their courageous attempt to help all of us see and better understand the nature of the war these men were not referred to as heroes. In fact, in what little coverage they were given, their very identities were put in question. They were referred to as "alleged veterans".

Today, almost 600 strong, healthy looking POWs have been returned. A small percent of them say they were tortured and are being allowed to create the impression that this torture was systematic and across-the-board. A Time Magazine headline reads, "At Last The Story Can Be Told." Nowhere do we hear "alleged torture" much less "alleged POWs". Their stories go unquestioned.

Yet should we not question stories which have come to us via a series of Pentagon-staged spectacles? It is, after all, the same Pentagon which has lied to the American people for more than twenty years about U.S. involvement in Indochina. Should we not question stories which are being embraced by an administration whose corruption makes Teapot Dome look like Laugh-In and whose commander-in-chief was instrumental in ushering in the McCarthy Era? Should we not question stories which belie everything we know about the Vietnamese? Or have we, in fact, not really taken the time or felt the need to know the Vietnamese, their culture and history, well enough to be able to defend them with confidence? Have we been made so cynical by our own institutionalized brutality that we automatically attribute these qualities to them? "After all, if a Vietnamese pilot were shot down here after bombing the hell out of our country he'd be torn to shreds in a minute, so what can you expect?"

Even people in the anti-war movement ask these questions as they seek justifications for brutality they just assume occurred. While it's important to remind people of what would happen in this country under similar circumstances, why do we make these assumptions about the Vietnamese? Have we become so hardened that we cannot countenance the possibility that there may be people who live differently, are motivated differently, do believe, as former POW pilot Norris Charles has said of them "that humans are basically good and once they know the truth then maybe react to it. And they don't care if you react or not, but they feel that they should treat you that way because they are very humane people."

There are enough returned POWs who speak about these qualities in the Vietnamese to reinforce what I thought many of us were confident about all along. There is a thousand year history of humane treatment accorded the defeated armies of the Mongols, Chinese, Japanese and French. Or have we not read their remarkable history?

My position on the POW issue has been widely misquoted and taken out of context. What I originally said and have continued to say is that the POWs are lying if they assert it was North Vietnamese policy to torture American prisoners. They are hypocrites because they are trying to pose as heroic victims when they were responsible for killing countless Vietnamese. They are pawns of the Nixon Administration propaganda effort to justify the war and discredit the anti-war movement.

I do not deny each and every claim of brutal treatment being made by the POWs. I was not there and brutality towards prisoners is not justifiable. But it is a lie, an orchestrated lie, to give the impression that the general policy of the Vietnamese was to torture.

The facts so far seem to be that a minority of prisoners claim to have been tortured. Many of them define torture as being forced to eat rice, drink hot water (the Vietnamese boil water to kill fatal bacteria), bow to their captors or be kept in solitary confinement. An equal number say they endured hardships and some have no criticism of the Vietnamese.

While some of the men are sincere, we must question the racism that may color their interpretations and the circumstances of the alleged mistreatment. How many cases of brutality were the result of resisting regulations at any cost? How much solitary confinement was caused by POWs carrying out U.S. military orders to conspire against, or even escape, their captors? How many need some justification for the strong anti-war statements they made while being detained to avoid the danger of court-martial?

We should welcome them back, grateful that they have their arms and legs and health but we should not do them and ourselves the disservice of making them into heroes.

These are no average G.I.s. These are a highly paid, hand-picked few who are participating in the resell-the-war campaign. These aren't the grunts who came back legless and jobless. They are the military elite, career officers.

As former POW and Green Beret, George Smith, has said, "We weren't kidnapped off the golf course at Fort Bragg. We volunteered for the job."

Some two-hundred U.S. Air Force Officers and men were revealed to have been involved in falsifying bombing reports being carried out under the orders of General Lavelle. We have uncovered too many fabrications in this war to once again believe in the fabricators.

Some of them, with great courage, have admitted they changed. "I had time to think

of what we were doing and the big old bugaboo conscience and morality began to show itself," says Navy Captain Walter Wilber whom I met in Hanoi. But these are not the men the Pentagon chose as hero-material. For that, others were chosen, like the POW who described the futile Xmas terror bombings as "the greatest show on earth," worth waiting a few extra years for "because I didn't want to go home a loser." Or another, "There are a lot of queers in that society." (Newsweek, April 9th). This is hero-material Nixon-style.

At a \$250,000 weekend bash given for the returned POWs by Ross Perot, John Wayne was quoted as saying, "this is a great country and a hell of a lot better because you fellows are back in it." All that was missing from a star-studded dinner at the Beverly Hilton in Los Angeles was Dr. Strangelove as the POWs were brought together with an astronaut amid the Star-Spangled Banner, the Lord's Prayer and Kipling. Former Actor, Ronald Reagan said, "you (the POWs) gave America back its soul. God bless a country which can produce men like you."

If we think it really doesn't matter perhaps we should go see "Cabaret" again. A charming movie, everything seems so normal as the sweet, kooky American co-ed floats from relationship to relationship. You have to pay close attention to notice that in the crowd are these men in brown shirts. So clean cut. So sweet. They sing their national anthem so beautifully, moving people to sing with them. You almost can't see that what is happening is the beginning of Nazi Germany.

We have been so conditioned to think that fascism only comes with prisons and bayonets in our backs, we forget that fascism comes in many forms. One way is to convince slaves that they're free and this is what will happen to us if we sit by while POWs are made into heroes and the Vietnamese are given pentagon masks. It is not the American pilots who have been brainwashed in Vietnam, it is we, the American people, right here at home, who are having our minds tampered with.

Contradictions In Hoffmans Torture Story

Serious contradictions have appeared in one of the most publicised POW tales of torture, that of Navy Commander David W. Hoffman, who says he was brutally forced into meeting Jane Fonda and Ramsey Clark.

Hoffman was shot down New Years Eve 1971, carrying out one of the bombing raids falsely labelled "protective reaction" at that time. He appeared at meetings with anti-war visitors at least six times in 1972, more than any other POW.

The Vietnamese healed the broken arm Hoffman sustained in crashing. By the time he saw Jane Fonda in July he could wave it up and down, and asked Jane to inform his wife of his improvement.

Now Hoffman claims his arm, in a cast, was re-broken by hanging to force him to see Fonda and Clark.

If Hoffman had to be "forced" to see Jane Fonda in July and Ramsey Clark in August, why did he voluntarily see Banning Garrett, George Wald and other visitors in

the months before?

Hoffman is virtually the only POW to claim being tortured in 1972. His co-pilot and prison room-mate, Norris Charles, says he never saw or heard of any torture in his camp. So does Navy Commander Walter Wilber. Ex-POW Mark Gartley has denied any torture also. Could Hoffman have had his arm re-broken and not noticed by those in his own compound?

Hoffman claims he was coerced because he was the ranking officer in his own compound, and this treatment would make others go. But Norris Charles says there were more than enough POWs who voluntarily wanted to see both Fonda and Clark. Wilber says of Fonda's visit: "she could see that we were healthy and had not been tortured" (LA Times, 4-7-73). Presumably, Wilber was including Hoffman, one of the seven men present.

Charles and Wilber have no reason to falsify here; they were interviewed before Hoffman's story appeared. Why then would Hoffman lie? One possibility, suggested by his own account, is that he "was met with antagonism from some of the other prisoners because of his appearance with the two anti-war activists" (LA Times, 4-13-73). Only by claiming that his visits with American delegations were the results of torture, rather than voluntary, could he avoid the charge of "collaborator."

For copies of this paper and more information, contact:
INDOCHINA PEACE OR
CAMPAIGN
181 Pier Avenue
Santa Monica, Ca.
90405
(213) 392-3942